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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001365

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CASC](#) [ET](#) [ER](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: PM AND FM ON SOMALIA, WASHINGTON VISIT
FOLLOW-UP, EEBC, AND MESHAL CASE

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 1349

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 1861 (NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. In separate meetings with Prime Minister Meles and Foreign Minister Seyoum on May 3, Somalia and follow-up to the Foreign Minister,s recent trip to Washington were key discussion topics with the Ambassador. The Prime Minister was concerned about the porous and open Kenyan-Somali border as a security problem, allowing extremist elements to use the area and pose threats to Ethiopia and undermining Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Foreign Minister Seyoum, in a separate meeting, said Yusuf is responding to Ethiopia,s urgings by reaching out to the Hawiye clans. Yusuf will soon provide a report to Ethiopia on his findings and, hopefully the Ethiopians will persuade Yusuf to speed up the dates for the national reconciliation conference. Foreign Minister Seyoum expressed his deep appreciation for the arrangements made for his visit to Washington. He praised National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley,s remarks calling for a joint committee to address Somalia, regional, and overall bilateral relations.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) Ambassador pressed the Foreign Minister to write to the new UN Secretary General to underscore Ethiopia,s commitment to the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC), highlighting the Witnesses' concern for normalization talks to resolve potential problems arising from a final demarcation of the border. The Foreign Minister also raised the case of detained Amcit Amir Mohamed Meshal and Ethiopia,s anticipated decision to publicly announce his release. This comes after a week of discussions with senior security officials by the Ambassador and Embassy staff. END SUMMARY.

SOMALIA: WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY IS SMALL

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Prime Minister Meles told Ambassador and ORA chief that recent fighting against extremist strongholds in Mogadishu had led to improved security and hopefully more community support against extremists. Meles noted that

community groups disarming roadside bomb traps, in an area patrolled by Ugandan troops of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), was a hopeful sign. Of concern to Meles is the Kenyan-Somalia border. Extremist groups would be able to operate in this region, freely crossing the Kenyan border without much resistance and just out of reach of Ethiopian-based troops, he said. Meles thought they might try isolating the region. He added that al-Itihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI) leader Hassan Abdullah Hersi al-Turki and other HVT operated in the south and around Kismayo.

14. (S/NF) In a separate meeting, Foreign Minister Seyoum, State Minister Takeda, and chief of staff Habte told Ambassador, DCM, and USAID director that pressure on TFG President Yusuf had proven ineffective. Seyoum had questioned Yusuf about Yusuf's approach with the Hawiye clan elders, and encouraged Yusuf's outreach programs. Seyoum said that Yusuf has been positive and would report to the GOE on his efforts with the Hawiye and other subclan elders. The Foreign Minister called for international support for the reconciliation conference, and for it be advanced rather than delayed until June.

WASHINGTON TRIP: HIGHLY IMPRESSED

15. (S/NF) Foreign Minister Seyoum reviewed his trip to Washington and New York, expressing his appreciation for the warm welcome at the State Department and National Security Council. He welcomed his meeting with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and Hadley's suggestion to form senior-level groups for both Ethiopia and the U.S., and for these two groups to meet to discuss regional problems and

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resolve or address bilateral issues.

EEBC

16. (S/NF) Seyoum reiterated the GOE's position that it accepts the EEBC decision as final and binding without qualification. Ambassador pressed the Foreign Minister to send a letter to the UN Secretary General stating this point. It will ease pressure on Ethiopia, but more importantly refocus attention on how to peacefully demarcate the border. The Witnesses to the Algiers Agreement support some type of normalization talks to ease tensions and ensure a peaceful and sustainable demarcation process. Seyoum noted that in the past Ethiopia did not wish to drop out of the EEBC process, and welcomed U.S. discussions on the future of the EEBC and the role Ethiopia should take.

MESHAL CASE

17. (S/NF) Ambassador reviewed for the Foreign Minister the problems of getting detained Amcit Amir Mohamed Meshal out of prison and escorted back to the U.S. Seyoum noted that the efforts by the Ambassador and staff to meet with the Justice Minister and Police Commissioner as well as Foreign Ministry senior officials, though time consuming, will help the U.S. secure official release of this citizen.

18. (S/NF) COMMENT: The Prime Minister and Foreign Minister strongly support U.S. relations and will pursue some type of joint bilateral commission to review regional issues and bilateral challenges. On a joint U.S.-Ethiopian approach to the TFG, Seyoum said he welcomed a meeting with Washington officials to discuss in detail the type of message and approach to be taken with the TFG. Removal of TFG Prime Minister Ghedi, Seyoum said, depends on the reconciliation

conference. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO